AAC CIVILIAN PM AND POST-UTILIZATION TASKFORCE

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Introduction

The Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) leadership recognizes that the AAC continues to experience serious problems in civilian career management. Although much has been done to make civilian files competitive in the selection board process, the low selection rates clearly indicate that civilian applicants have not faired well on recent product or project manager (PM) selection boards. Career expectations of those who were selected to PM positions were based on the promises of former AAC leaders that selectees would have follow-on assignments of "appropriate equal or greater responsibility." But no institutional process was established to provide these assignments to PMs, Senior Service College graduates, and Long Term Training Program participants. In some cases, individuals were simply left to their own devices to find follow-on positions.

The Taskforce

In recognition of these problems, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology/Army Acquisition Executive (ASAALT/AAE) Claude M. Bolton Jr. tasked the Acquisition Support Center (ASC) to establish an AAC Civilian PM and Post-Utilization Taskforce. Henry Jehan, former Project Manager, Military Satellite Communications, was given the post-utilization assignment of leading the effort. The taskforce was initiated in early July 2002 and was tasked to report before Sept. 30, 2002, to the ASAALT and his Military Deputy, LTG John S. Caldwell Jr.

To ensure that the taskforce developed in-depth solutions that addressed the root cause issues and not just some of the symptoms, a life-cycle approach was used. In many respects, a PM's career can be thought of in terms of the acquisition life-cycle model, the same model used to describe managed weapon systems. Just as a weapon system transitions from concept, to development, to fielding, and to disposal as it progresses through the life cycle, antidotal evidence indicates that a PM follows an analogous career path. The individual enters the acquisition workforce with the hope of becoming a PM, experiences development and training, and is *fielded* as a PM. Eventually, he or she moves on to disposal in a post-utilization assignment or through retirement. Because multiple individuals pass through the life-cycle process, the events have a circular linking. An event in one phase of the life cycle for an individual directly impacts previous life-cycle events as they are subsequently experienced by other individuals. Thus, the taskforce cannot look at post-utilization as a problem apart from the rest of the career path. Although chartered to look at the post-utilization issue, the taskforce had to take a broader view and look at the full life cycle.

Issue Identification

The first challenge that the taskforce faced was to establish a comprehensive picture of the issues. Although antidotal information was available from many sources, including some former PMs and HQDA staff, it was incomplete at best. Likewise, available information from previous action teams was also very limited in scope. Thus, the taskforce began with an unprecedented effort to acquire comprehensive data describing the issues. They elected to conduct sensing sessions to capture the full spectrum of issues (Figure 1). Invitations were sent to two groups: current and former centrally selected PMs and AAC or HQDA staff. The two groups were purposely segregated to ensure that the input received would give a 360-degree picture of the issues from the perspective of both the PMs and the managing staff.

Invitees to the PM session included 34 individuals who had completed a tour as a product or project manager and 15 newly assigned PMs. On July 31, 2002, 26 of the invitees (Figure 2) assembled at the Defense Acquisition University Collaborative Management Decision Facility at Fort Belvoir, VA. During the daylong session, they captured the issues associated with the life cycle of an AAC civilian PM. The next day, 13 participants representing the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command and ASC's Force Structure, Acquisition Career Management, and Personnel Management Divisions met in the same facility to repeat the issue-

gathering process. By using automated collaboration tools, personnel from the two sensing sessions identified and categorized 136 issues in 32 separate, but not necessarily unique, categories. They also identified concepts for corrective action—information that was segregated from the issue data and held for the solution-analysis effort.

The next step was to prioritize the issues so that appropriate solutions could be generated. The taskforce made two basic assumptions: Most of the issues collected in the sensing sessions were symptoms describing a smaller number of root cause issues, and, for the most part, the raw issue data from the sensing sessions did not create a clear and complete articulation of the root cause issues. Based on these premises, a small working group was established and tasked to extract the root cause issues from the symptomatic issues identified in the two

sensing sessions and the data available from prior assessments.

The root cause issue analysis resulted in identification of 14 root cause categories, supported by 40 detailed root cause issue statements. The 14 root cause categories were as follows:

• Unclear and inconsistent mobility expectations and policy,
• Lack of financial incentives,
• No career path beyond GS-15 (or equivalent personnel demonstration broadband level) or O-6 level PM,
• Improper use of permanent assignments to temporary or term positions,
• Inadequate supervisory and pre-command training,
• No meaningful civilian career model,
• Lack of civilian understanding of the board process,

• Deficiencies in Senior Rater Potential Evaluations,
• Deficiencies in Acquisition Civilian Record Briefs,
• Inadequate and inconsistent administration of benefits and entitlements,
• Inadequate peer socialization and leadership recognition,
• Inadequate cross-function communication within OASAALT,
• Lack of acquisition requirements accountability, and
• Inadequate leadership commitment and follow-through.

Solution Identification

The third phase of the taskforce effort was to identify solutions to the 40 root cause issues in the 14 root cause issue categories, develop implementing strategies, staff the appropriate implementation actions, and secure approval for implementation. To accomplish this, a solutions identification team was established.
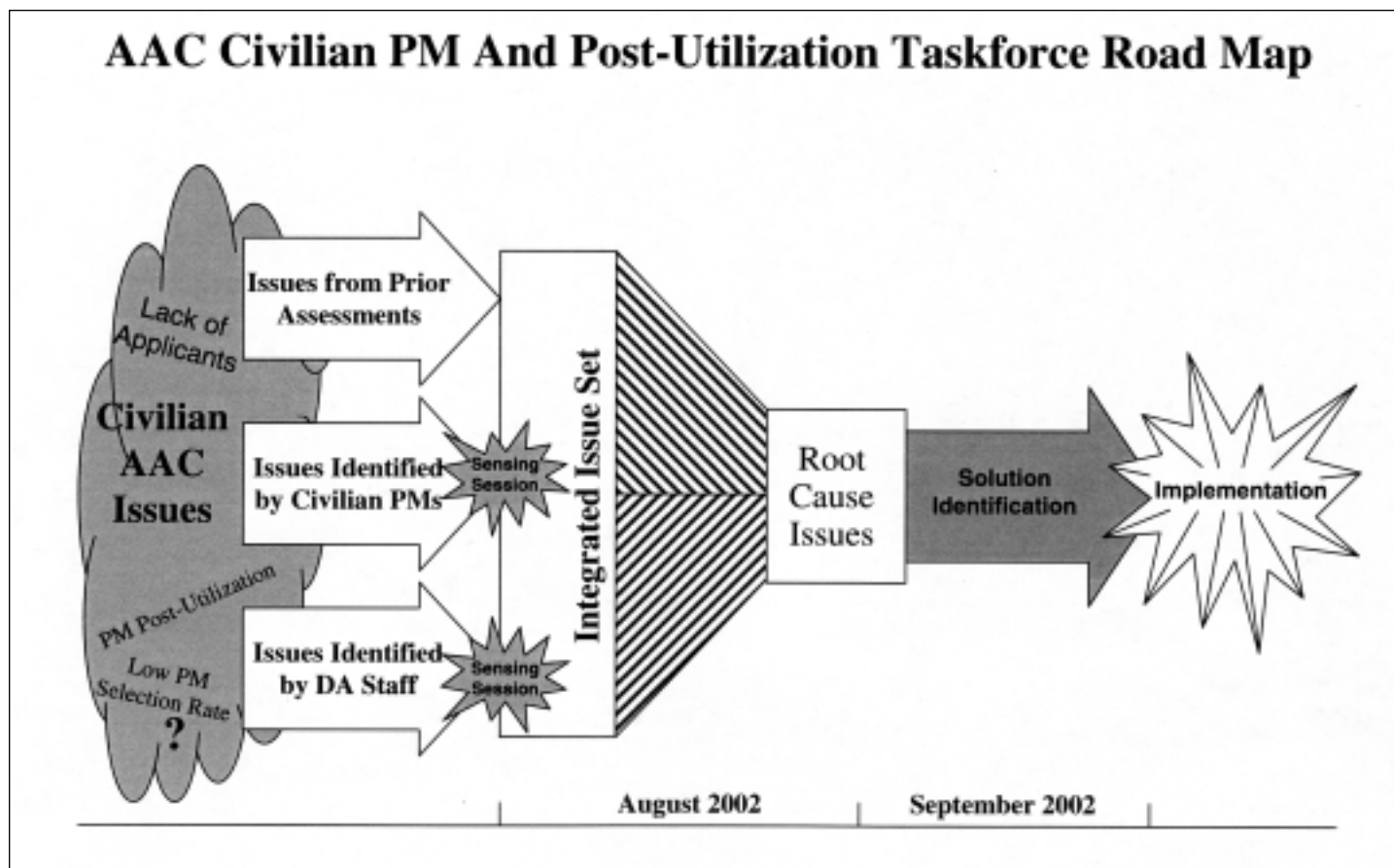

Figure 1.

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PM Sensing Session Participant Statistics
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There were 49 individuals in the population of current and former centrally selected civilian product and project managers.

• Twenty-two were current or former product managers (8 of whom became project managers).

• Thirty-five were current or former project managers (8 of whom were also former product managers).

Of the 49 individuals, 26 participated in the sensing session. Of these 26:

• Five are currently product managers.
• Five are currently project managers.
• Three are in follow-on positions of greater responsibility (1 SES).
• Three are currently in follow-on positions of lesser responsibility.
• One is in a holding position until a job materializes.
• Three started the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in August 2002.
• Three have retired.
• Two will retire by the end of 2002.
• One left DA for government service outside of DOD.
• Five have been project managers twice.
• Four were product managers before becoming project managers.
• Five were in the Competitive Development Group before becoming product managers.

Figure 2.

The team reviewed the root cause issues and the suggested solutions from the two sensing sessions. In applying solutions to the root cause issues, it was determined that the list was incomplete. Subsequently, 10 additional root cause issues were added. Because some solution actions corrected problems across several root cause categories, several of the root cause issues were addressed by a single solution. When the list of root cause issues and solutions were recategorized by solution category, the 14 root cause categories were reduced to the following 10 solution categories.

• Road to Senior Executive Service (SES),
• Personnel action execution,
• Personnel management policy,
• Benefits counseling and administration,
• Civilian career model,
• Board selection process,
• Training initiatives,
• DA policy,

• ASC and PERSCOM Acquisition Management Branch policy and procedures, and
• Leadership.

The taskforce identified solutions for every root cause issue in the 10 solution categories. Where possible, the solution was implemented at the staff level. In some cases, implementation required action by senior leadership. And, in a few cases, corrective action required identification of efforts to change DOD policy or law.

On Sept. 23, 2002, the taskforce provided an outbriefing to the AAE on the 34 implementation actions it identified. In particular, the briefing focused on the 16 actions requiring AAE attention. The AAE was also informed of the five solutions implemented at the staff level and the 13 actions requiring further staff effort. Bolton was favorably impressed with the results of the taskforce and expressed his support for continued efforts and execution on all but one of the implementing actions. While some of the improvements suggested

by the taskforce will take time to fully implement, we expect to see some near-term results. In conclusion, the taskforce has identified, and senior leadership has endorsed, implementation of corrective actions that will go a long way toward eliminating the problems of civilian PM post-utilization and low selection rates.

The inputs from the sensing sessions, a listing of the root cause issues, the identified solutions, and the implementing actions can be found at **http://asc.rdaisa. army.mil**. (Click on **AAC Civilian PM and Post Utilization Taskforce**.)

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